

Stress or Burnout: What's the Difference??

By Jeanne May... 9/02/08

Stress and burnout are often seen as the same thing. But they are not the same.

Stress happens to everyone every single day! Each person experiences and copes with stress very differently. What is stressful to you may not be to me... and vice versa! And how you react to stress and cope with it will be very different to the way I do.

Burnout is a topic close to my heart! ... I experienced burnout 24 years ago... and then, more recently, towards the end of 2007 I found myself heading there again.

Most people see burnout as only happening to high-powered, overworked business executives. But the reality is, burnout can happen to almost anyone -- it is not reserved to a select group of people in a select area of work!

Burnout can occur in caregivers (for example, a someone who's sole caregiver for a chronically or seriously ill person over a long period of time e.g. with Alzheimer's disease), executives, stay at home mums or dads with several young children, health care workers (e.g. doctors, psychologists, nurses, vets)... to name a few.

In other words... it can happen to anyone doing too many taxing things over a long period of time.

So... what is burnout? And what is the difference between burnout and stress?

Well... according to Wikipedia, "burnout is a psychological term for the experience of long-term exhaustion and diminished interest."

And according to Wikipedia, "stress is the condition that results when person-environment transactions lead the individual to perceive a discrepancy, whether real or not, between the demands of the situation and the resources of the person's biological, psychological or social systems."

There is a huge difference between burnout and stress. Stress is a normal part of daily living... every single person experiences some degree of stress in their lives each day. Burnout, on the other hand, may be the result of unrelenting stress, but it isn't the same as too much stress.

Stress is an overload of pressure that demands too much of you both physically and psychologically. People experiencing stress can usually see that they will feel better when they can get everything under control.

Burnout, on the other hand, is prolonged stress and pressure. It is emotional and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It results in feeling empty, totally exhausted, very overwhelmed, and devoid of motivation.

Burnout reduces your productivity and saps your energy... it may leave you feeling increasingly helpless, hopeless, powerless, often cynical and resentful. People experiencing burnout very seldom see there is any likelihood of feeling better. They begin to lose interest and motivation that led them to take on the roles and responsibilities in the first place e.g. being caregiver.

The unhappiness burnout causes can eventually threaten your job, your relationships and your health.

Another major difference between stress and burnout is: usually you are aware you are under a lot of stress, but you usually don't notice burnout when it happens. The symptoms of burnout including total exhaustion, feelings of detachment, hopelessness, often take months to appear.

It is not uncommon for someone else to point out you may be experiencing burnout... many people with burnout don't see it in themselves. More often than not, work colleagues, family members, partners, friends, or doctors will see the signs of burnout long before the person sees it in him or herself.

If the signs are recognised in time... burnout can be prevented or alleviated.

Please note: I'm not saying for one moment that everyone will experience burnout... far from it!

But burnout does exist... it is real and its effects can be devastating if not recognised and dealt with effectively.

Jeanne May of Aspirations Plus, works with spiritually minded people providing them with information, inspiration, guidance and support to achieve their goals and dreams. Receive a complimentary copy of "#1 Ingredient To Fast Track Your Success!" by subscribing to Aspirations Plus at <http://www.aspirationsplus.com>